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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/I

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: RRT ERBIL: SLIMMED DOWN KRG CABINET SWORN IN

Classified By: RRT Erbil Team Leader Andrew Snow for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (U) This is an RRT Erbil cable.

[12](#). (C) Summary: On October 28, following over three months of intense inter-party negotiations, the sixth cabinet of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) was sworn in. The new cabinet, led by former GOI Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Barham Salih, consists of 19 ministries, pared down from 42 in the previous government. The reduction was achieved by merging some ministries and dissolving others completely. As predicted, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) sought to balance each other; each having seven ministries, and with KDP commanding more of the "power" ministries. Even after countless meetings and conversations with various political entities, the final list is still fluid; the Minister of Electricity remains unnamed. Rumors that opposition parties intended to do something provocative came to fruition: they walked out of the closed pre-ceremony session at which members of parliament voted to approve the new cabinet. The walkout was prompted by the majority's refusal to allow the opposition to question the future ministers. End Summary.

#### Structural Changes

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[13](#). (C) The previous, fifth KRG cabinet comprised of 42 ministers, was unwieldy. The large number of ministries in the previous government allowed the KRG to cement the merger of the earlier, separate KDP and PUK administrations by buying loyalty from a broad group of factions and personalities. In a recent meeting, former Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani conceded that while his biggest success had been building confidence between the KDP and the PUK, it was difficult having so many ministers. Other KRGers have told us that having the deputy minister be from the opposite party of the minister did not work well. The KRG has yet to announce who will be deputy ministers; some RRT contacts believe this system will be abolished.

[14](#). (C) The Ministry of Human rights, the Ministry of the Environment, and the Ministry of Extra-Regional Affairs have all been dissolved. The functions of some of these ministries may be continued through the creation of non-ministerial bodies, such as a Commission on Human Rights. The seven Ministers of the Regions, have also been eliminated. These were Ministers without portfolios; largely honorific positions granted to minority and opposition parties to grant them representation in the previous government.

[15](#). (U) Ten of the previous government's ministries were consolidated to create five ministries in the new government. The Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Industry were combined. Similarly the KRG now has a Ministry of Municipality and Tourism, a Ministry of Transportation and Communication, a Ministry of Culture and Youths, and a Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources. The separate

PUK and KDP Finance and Economy Ministries have also finally been merged.

PUK:

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¶6. (C) The PUK retains control of the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs under the continuing leadership of Sheikh Jafar Mustafa Ali. The PUK will also control the unified Ministry of Finance and the Economy, with Bayiz Saeed Mohammad Talabany as minister. The PUK also got the Ministry of Health with former university professor, Dr. Tahir Hawrami as Minister.

¶7. (C) Kamaran Ahmed Abdullah, the former manager for the Suleymaniah Airport and a well regarded technocrat, will lead PUK,s Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction. Noted QPUK,s Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction. Noted political academic and son of a famous Kurdish writer, Dlawer A.A. Ala,Aldeen will take over as the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will be headed by the only female cabinet member, Ms. Asos Najib Abdullah. The Minister of Martyrs and Anfal will be former deputy minister, Dr. Majid Hamad Amin Jamil, who up to two days ago was slotted to be the new Minister of Health.

KDP:

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¶8. (C) As expected, Minister Abdul Karim Sultan Sinjari (Karim Sinjari) will continue leading the powerful Ministry for the Interior (KMoI). The KDP will continue to control the Ministry of Natural Resources with Abdullah Abdulrahman Abdullah (Ashti Hawrami) returning despite the recent

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controversy with the Norwegian oil company DNO. (Comment: The reappointment of Hawrami confirms there is no daylight between senior KDP leadership and Hawrami on the DNO controversy. On October 19, Talabani Advisor Aram Yarwessi told PolOff that Barham wanted to remove Ashti Hawrami following the DNO scandal, but Nechirvan Barzani resisted. Ashti and Nechirvan are close friends. According to Yarwessi, Barham did not want to upset Nechirvan since he "gave permission" to let Barham have the Prime Ministry. End Comment.) The third KDP power ministry will be the Ministry of Education, with Safin Dizayee as Minister. The UK-educated Dizayee has been the KDP External Relations Director and a key player on the KRG,s relations with Turkey, having covered Turkey for many years as the KDP representative in Ankara. His elevation to ministerial status may be related to the KRG,s success in improving relations with Ankara.

¶9. (SBU) The KDP will also control the Ministry of Justice, with Raouf Rashid Abdulrahman, a respected judge who presided at the trial of Saddam Hussein, as Minister. It has been reported that the new Minister of Justice will act as a chief prosecutor, with the authority to bring to trial even those at the highest levels of government. (Note: Under existing law, only a Judge of the Kurdistan Judicial council has such authority. End Note.) This is seen as an anti-corruption move.

¶10. (C) Dual Kurdish-Swedish national, Samir Abdullah Mustafa, will be Minister of Municipality and Tourism. The Minister of Planning will be Ali Osman Haji Badri Sindi, who is rumored to have helped build up Nechirvan Barzani's personal fortune by running private medical clinics that benefit from government support.

Other Parties:

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¶11. (C) Much of the wrangling over the past few months was aimed at convincing other parties to join the government. Both KDP and PUK party officials repeatedly stated that the main requirement for those joining the government was a commitment to hew to the government line. Having been frustrated by some coalition partners (Service and Reform)

that were in the previous government but ran against the ruling parties in the election, KRG leaders did not want parties joining the government to both reap the benefits of heading a ministry and gain popular support by publicly criticizing the KDP/PUK alliance as a means by which to demonstrate their opposition credentials.

¶12. (C) The still-to-be-named Minister of Electricity is likely to be from the Kurdistan Social Democratic Party. Intellectual and academic Kawa Mahmoud Shakir (Kurdistan Communist Party) will be Minister of Culture and Youth. The dual Kurdish-Swedish national and ethnic Yezidy Jamil Sleiman Haider will be the Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources. Kamil Ali Aziz will represent the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK) as the Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs. The IMK was in opposition to the last government, whereas the two other Islamist parties (KIU and KIG) cooperated with the last government, but are now in opposition. The Christians will be represented by Anwar Jabali Sabo as Minister of Transport and Communications. Minister Anwar Sabo has very strong personal ties to the former Minister of Finance and to the KDP. The Ministry of Trade and Industry will be headed by the Turkoman Sinan Abdulkhalq Ahmed Chalabi. Minister Chalabi has spent significant periods of time in Turkey and is a successful businessman. He is considered a technocrat, and his selection seems to be intended to reinforce the Kurdistan Region's growing economic ties to Turkey.

The Opposition:

¶13. (C) Three significant political entities will not be represented in the government. The moderate Islamist party, the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) ran in the July election with three other parties (Service and Reform alliance) on an oppositionist platform. Despite pressure from the KDP/PUK coalition, the KIU decided to stick to their principles and be in opposition. It is no surprise that Goran has also chosen to remain in the opposition, although it was interesting to hear Kamal Kirkuki, the speaker of that Parliament, say in a meeting last week that the KDP/PUK alliance was still trying to get Goran to join the government. The Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) was expected to join the government, although in a meeting with their leader Ali Bapir, he said that they would only join on certain conditions: no arrests without a warrant, timely trials, and budget transparency. However, Azad Barwary, the new Deputy Prime Minister later told RRToffs that the KIG had two further conditions: 1) that there be no law other than

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that based on Sharia, and; 2) that one of their politburo members living in Iran, who has suspected ties to al-Qaeda, be allowed to return to Iraq and be named the new Kurdistan Region Minister of Education. KRG Presidency Chief of Staff Dr. Fuad Hussein told RRToffs the KIG also wanted separate schools for boys and girls. These KDP officials said they rejected the conditions and the KIG lost the opportunity to join the government.

¶14. (C) Beginning last week there were rumors that Goran, with 25 seats in parliament, intended to challenge the process of seating the new cabinet. In the closed morning session, Goran objected to having a vote on the new cabinet without giving the parliament time to review the names and parliamentarians the opportunity to question the new ministers. When their request was over-ruled by the majority, Goran parliamentarians walked out of the session, soon followed by the KIU. According to KIG sources, their members would also have walked out, but they remained in their seats so that they could vote "no" on the new government. In the end, the new ministers were all voted in (complete list in para 16) with over seventy votes and only three or four against (depending on the minister).

Comment:

¶15. (C) In his meeting with Generals Caslen and Cucolo, which took place shortly after the swearing-in ceremony, KRG President Masoud Barzani characterized the new government as being a 'coalition cabinet' representing different parties and ethnic groups. The ruling parties spent considerable amount of time and effort trying to be inclusive, probably motivated by a desire to reduce criticism by co-opting other parties, to blunt the impact of the emergence of Change List, and to present a united front to Baghdad. In the end, despite repeated calls by opposition parties to have ministers appointed based on their technical abilities, the majority of the ministers appear to have been selected based on party loyalties. The smaller number of ministers in the government could allow for greater effectiveness, and the significant share of ministries held by other political parties and minorities is a gesture towards broadening the KRG's political base. End comment.

¶16. (SBU) The 6th Kurdistan Regional Government:  
Prime Minister; Dr. Barham Salih (PUK)  
Deputy Prime Minister; Azad Barwari (KDP)  
Minister of Justice; Raouf Rashid Abdulrahman (KDP)  
Minister of Peshmerga Affairs; Jafar Mustafa Ali (PUK)\*  
Minister for the Interior; Abdul Karim Sultan Sinjari (Karim Sinjari) (KDP)\*  
Minister of Finance and the Economy; Bayiz Saeed Mohammad Talabany (PUK)\*  
Minister of Natural Resources; Abdullah Abdulrahman Abdullah (Ashti Hawrami) (KDP)\*  
Minister of Health; Taher Abdullah Hussein Hawrami (PUK)  
Minister of Education; Safin Muhsin Mohammad Amin Dizayee (KDP)  
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction; Kamaran Ahmed Abdullah (PUK)  
Minister of Municipalities and Tourism; Samir Abdullah Mustafa (KDP)  
Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research; Dlawer A.A. Ala,Aldeen (PUK)  
Minister of Planning; Ali Osman Haji Badri Sindi (KDP)  
Minister of Labour and Social Affairs; Ms. Asos Najib Abdullah (PUK)  
Minister of Culture and Youth; Kawa Mahmoud Shakir (Kurdistan Communist Party)  
Minister of Martyrs and Victims of Anfal; Dr. Majid Hamad Amin Jamil (PUK)  
Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources; Jamil Sleiman Haider (Yezidy)  
Minister of Trade and Industry; Sinan Abdulkhalq Ahmed Chalabi (Turkoman)  
Minister of Transport and Communications; Anwar Jabali Sabo  
QMinister of Transport and Communications; Anwar Jabali Sabo (Christian)  
Minister of Endowment and Religious Affairs; Kamil Ali Aziz (IMK)  
Minister of Electricity; not yet named (KSDP)  
\* Designates a returning Minister

HILL